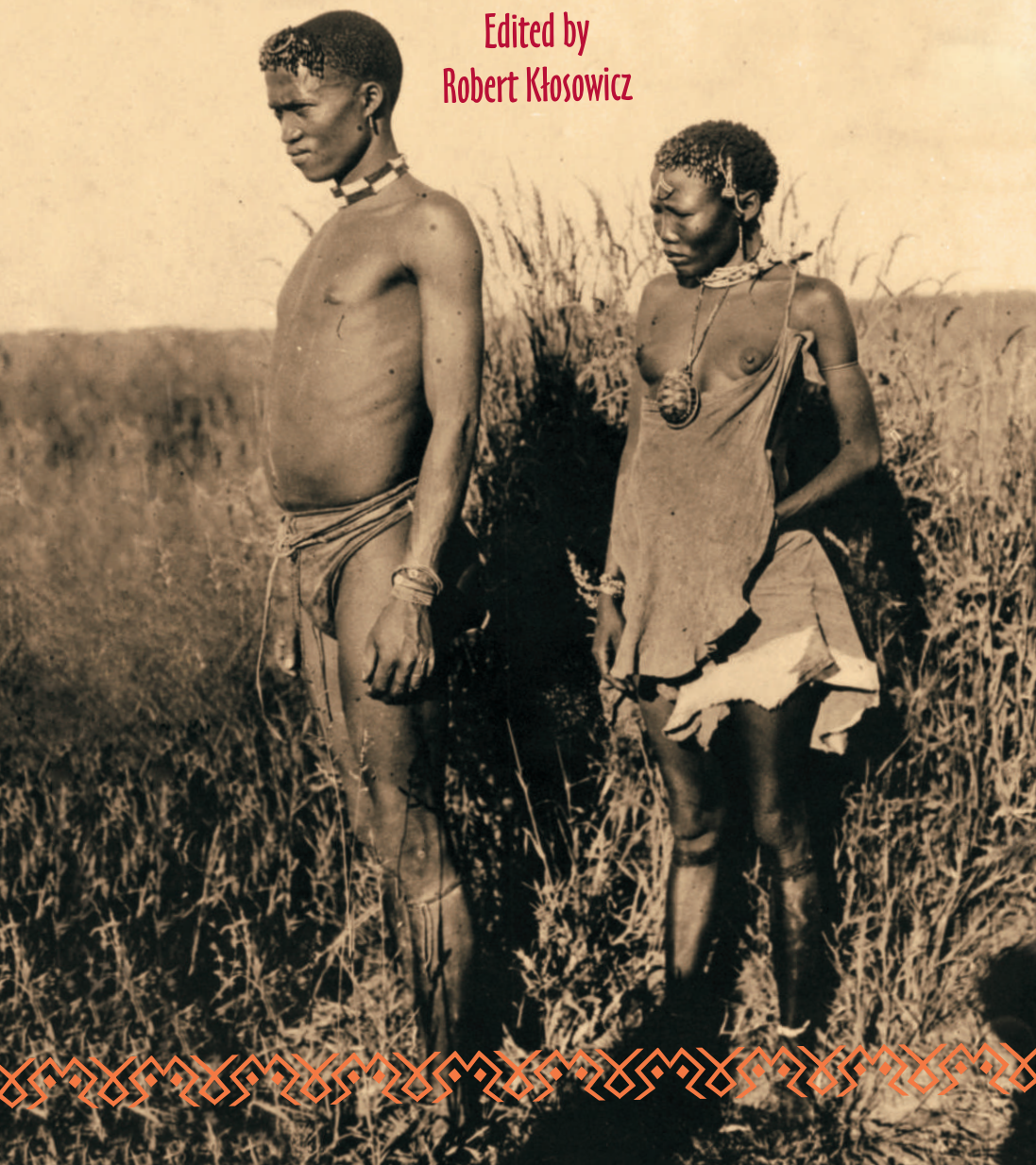


# PIONEERS OF AFRICAN STUDIES IN KRAKÓW



Edited by  
Robert Kłosowicz





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In memory of Professor Roman Stopa (1895-1995)



Edited by  
Robert Kłosowicz



Kraków

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Paweł Siwiec 

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## ROMAN STOPA – PIONEER OF POLISH AFRICAN STUDIES



**R**OMAN STOPA was one of the most renowned world specialists in the field of Bushman-Hottentot languages. This would explain the words of another well-known Pole, Bronisław Malinowski, who referred to him as a world expert in clicks in the 14<sup>th</sup> edition of the *Encyclopaedia Britannica*.<sup>1</sup> Without a doubt, he was the father of the Polish school of African linguistics.

In 1935, the book *Die Schnalze Ihre Natur, Entwicklung und Ursprung* [Clicks. Their Character, Development and Origin], the fruit of Dr Roman Stopa's six-year-long studies, was published by Polska Akademia Umiejętności (The Polish Academy of Arts and Sciences), prepared on the basis of his astute and wide-ranging analysis of the literature available at the time on the topic. The book was the first

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<sup>1</sup> R. STOPA, *Spod chłopskiej strzechy na katedrę uniwersytetu*, Kraków 1987, p. 60.

such comprehensive study on click consonants,<sup>2</sup> characteristic for the languages of the Bushman-Hottentot group.<sup>3</sup> The author did not limit himself just to providing a classification and a description of the articulation and acoustics. Using the comparative method, he also traced the phonetic changes, both within the Khoisan group itself and in some of the languages of the Bantu peoples historically neighbouring the Bushmen. In short, these changes were supposed to have involved the transition of click consonants into ejective, injective, labiovelar or – finally – expiratory sounds. References to these remarks, expanded by further analyses, were included in Roman Stopa's habilitation dissertation entitled *Teksty hotentockie (Hai-/omn i nama) = Hai/omn- und Namtexte*<sup>4</sup> [Hottentot texts] and the article *Die Schnalzlaute im Zusammenhang mit den sonstigen Lautesten der menschlichen Sprache*.

After World War II, the article *Bushman and Hottentot among the Isolating Languages of Africa*<sup>5</sup> was published, in which Roman Stopa convincingly showed that the Bushman-type languages with their characteristic clicks must have constituted the original basis on which the non-click

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<sup>2</sup> Articulated independently of the respiration process, with a sucking movement of the tongue or lips. We can distinguish labial, dental, lateral, alveolar, cerebral and palatal clicks, marked using the following symbols respectively: ○, /, //, \*, †, ///. Each of these clicks is articulated with two closures simultaneously: a front one (the lips, teeth, gums, palate) and a back one – velar.

<sup>3</sup> The Khoisan language group according to Joseph Greenberg's classification.

<sup>4</sup> R. STOPA, *Teksty hotentockie (Hai //omn i Nama) Hai //omn und Namatexte*, Kraków 1936, *Polska Akademia Umiejętności. Komisja Orientalistyczna. Prace*, no. 26.

<sup>5</sup> IDEM, *Bushman and Hottentot among the Isolating Languages of Africa*, "Rocznik Orientalistyczny" 1953, vol. 17, pp. 351-371.

languages of the Niger-Congo group developed.<sup>6</sup> The most suggestive example of such an evolution refers to the languages of the Kwa subgroup, especially Ewe currently used, for example, in Togo and Ghana. Simultaneously, he refers to the rich evidence conclusively confirming his hypothesis. Here is a short but representative fragment of such a comparison cited from these publications:<sup>7</sup>

	Hottentot-Bushman	Sudanic
1. !kw, !w > kp	S <sub>1</sub> !kwe 'perforated stone' N <sub>1</sub> !ko: < * !kwo 'back' N <sub>3</sub> !o 'back'	E. kpe 'stone' E. kpo 'back'
2. !gw, !kw > gb	S <sub>1</sub> !kwa 'to break to pieces' S <sub>1</sub> !koa, S <sub>5</sub> !ga:-ana, N <sub>3</sub> !k'a 'drum, pot'	E. gba, gba 'break' E. gbagba < * !gwa !gwa 'drum'
3. ⊙h > /k, /k > /' > f, v ⊙' > !k' > p' > p (f, f, h)	S <sub>3</sub> /ku, C <sub>2</sub> /u~ < * ⊙hu~ 'hair' S <sub>2</sub> ⊙pwoinki, #i~, S <sub>6</sub> /ki, S <sub>1</sub> -⊙pwa, C <sub>2</sub> -/kwa 'child', small'	E. fu, fu~ 'hair' E. vi 'child' (S. -bi, pi) Ibo mua 'to bear child'

The text *The evolution of click sounds in some African languages* was published a few years later,<sup>8</sup> in which Roman Stopa presented the results of his research of an even wider scale, additionally encompassing the Bantu languages and the group of Atlantic languages of the Niger-Congo family – the Chadic languages.<sup>9</sup> The rich comparative ma-

<sup>6</sup> The author uses the older term 'West Sudanic languages'.

<sup>7</sup> R. STOPA, *Bushman and Hottentot...*, p. 369.

<sup>8</sup> IDEM, *The evolution of click sounds in some African languages*, Kraków 1960, *Zeszyty Naukowe Uniwersytetu Jagiellońskiego. Rozprawy i Studia*, vol. 25.

<sup>9</sup> At the time, categorized as Hamitic languages after Carl Meinhof.

terial (an analysis of the roots of the basic vocabulary in such languages as Zulu, Xhosa, Yoruba, Ewe, Hausa and Fula) revealed characteristic features indicating a relationship with Bushman-Hottentot roots or even that they are a continuation of these roots. On this basis, Roman Stopa corrected his earlier hypothesis, showing that the point of departure for the development of all the listed language groups was the Pigmy-Bushman substratum. The phonetic differentiating of the languages was supposed to have involved:

the transition of the expiratory-ejective-click system of the Hottentot-Bushmen system into:

1. 1. the expiratory-disjunctive phonetic system of the Sudanic group, the labiovelar click clusters *!kw*, *!gw* change into the disjunctive *kp*, *gb*;
2. 2. the expiratory-injective phonetic system of the Bantu group;  $(m)k/g > (m)'b$ ,  $(n)/k/g > 'd$ ,  $(\eta)/k/g > (\eta)'g$ ...
3. 3. the expiratory-ejective phonetic system of the Hamitic group;  $(m)!k' > (m)p'$ ,  $(n) \neq k' > (n)t'$ ,  $(n)/k' > (n)ts'$ ...<sup>10</sup>

Generally, according to Roman Stopa, the development of click sounds (click clusters) took place bi-directionally: predominance was achieved by either the frontal or back articulation elements. As a result, for example, the ejective *t'a* could have developed from the original click-ejective

<sup>10</sup> R. STOPA, *The evolution of click sounds...*, pp. 99-100.

/k'a (hand), after which this could have changed into the expiratory *ta* or the ejective *k'a*, and finally the expiratory *ka*.<sup>11</sup>

The conclusions derived from the comparative studies of the phonetic systems of the above-mentioned languages, supported by observations from the fields of ethnology and anthropology, led the researcher from Kraków to more comprehensive multifaceted research into the traces of genetic relationships on the linguistic map of Africa. This resulted in two extensive articles: *The genetic unity of African languages*<sup>12</sup> and *Bushman substratum or Bushman origin in Hausa*<sup>13</sup>, demonstrating that West Sudanic,<sup>14</sup> Bantu and Hamito-Semitic<sup>15</sup> languages constitute a developmental *continuum* with its sources in Bushman languages.<sup>16</sup> This was evidenced by not only the in-depth analysis of comparative phonetic material,<sup>17</sup> but also by the convincingly

<sup>11</sup> *Ibidem*, pp. 33-34, 72-73.

<sup>12</sup> IDEM, *The genetic unity of African languages*, "Folia Orientalia" 1966, vol. 7, pp. 227-273.

<sup>13</sup> IDEM, *Bushman substratum or Bushman origin in Hausa*, "Folia Orientalia" 1968, vol. 9, pp. 151-234.

<sup>14</sup> According to Joseph Greenberg's classification – the Atlantic languages of the Niger-Congo family.

<sup>15</sup> Currently Afroasiatic.

<sup>16</sup> Less than a decade later, a similar article about West Sudanic languages was published, cf. R. STOPA, *The evolution of click sounds in West-Sudanic*, [in:] *Wort und Wirklichkeit. Studien zur Afrikanistik und Orientalistik*, vol. 2: *Linguistik und Kulturwissenschaft* [Eugen Ludwig Rapp zum 70. Geburtstag], ed. by B. BENZING, O. BÖCHER, G. MAYER, Verlag A. Hain, Meisenheim am Glan 1977, pp. 65-88.

<sup>17</sup> The author based his work on the following texts, among others: W.H.I. BLEEK (*A comparative grammar of South African languages*, Trübner, London 1869), D. WESTERMANN (*Die Sudansprachen*, De Gruyter, Hamburg 1911), M. COHEN (*Essai comparatif sur le vocabulaire et la phonétique du chamito-sémitique*, Champion, Paris 1947) and L. HOMBURGER (*Les noms égyptiens des parties du corps dans les langues négro-africaines*, "Comptes

reconstructed Bushmen genealogy of over 250 words from the Hamito-Semitic group.<sup>18</sup>

Parallel to his studies into African languages, especially the Bushman tongues, Prof. Stopa also researched glottology. His interest in the genesis of human speech goes back to the very beginnings of his academic career, as can be attested by the subject of the doctoral thesis he defended in 1927 "Uznaczeniowanie dźwięków indoeuropejskiej jedności językowej jako przykład powszechnych procesów mowotwórczych" [Significantising the sounds of Indo-European language unity as an example of widespread speech formation processes].<sup>19</sup> Almost 30 years later, he dedicated a separate extensive article to this issue, entitled *Powstanie mowy ludzkiej w oświeceniu antropologii i językoznawstwa* [The formation of human speech in light of anthropology and linguistic studies].<sup>20</sup>

However, this topic was most fully discussed, enriched by subsequent years of research into African languages, in two later books: *Structure of Bushman and Its Traces in Indo-European*<sup>21</sup> and *Studies in African Languages (Essays on*

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rendus des séances de l'Académie des Inscriptions et Belles-Lettres" 1928, vol. 72, no. 4).

<sup>18</sup> R. STOPA, *The genetic unity of African languages*, pp. 251-252.

<sup>19</sup> Incidentally, it was his thesis supervisor Prof. Jan Michał Rozwadowski, at the time Chair of the Oriental Studies Commission and the Anthropological Commission of the Polish Academy of Arts and Sciences, who encouraged the young academic to begin research into the phonetics of Bushman and Hottentot languages.

<sup>20</sup> R. STOPA, *Powstanie mowy ludzkiej w oświeceniu antropologii i językoznawstwa*, "Przegląd Antropologiczny" 1956, vol. 22, pp. 333-469.

<sup>21</sup> IDEM, *Structure of Bushman and Its Traces in Indo-European*, Zakład Narodowy im. Ossolińskich, Wydawnictwo PAN, Wrocław et al. 1972, *Prace Komisji Orientalistycznej – Polska Akademia Nauk. Oddział w Krakowie*.

*Phonetics, Semantics and Meaning*),<sup>22</sup> published two years before his death. It draws attention that the first of these texts was dedicated to the Italian linguist Alfred Trombetti (1866-1929), a known supporter and proponent of the theory of the monogenesis of languages. In his glottogenetic studies, the researcher from Kraków referred to acknowledged facts from the fields of anthropology, archaeology and ethnology, such as:

- Africa is the cradle of human life;
- all the levels of anthropological and cultural development are easily observable in Africa;
- the most archaic level of cultural development is presented by the Bushmen.

These facts led him to the self-explanatory conclusions that Africa should be considered the cradle of human speech, while the Bushman language – a living relict of the language of early man. This, in turn, in his opinion allows for the searching for traces and spores of primordial human speech behaviours, of which the Bushman languages are a rich reservoir, spreading far beyond the African continent.

In recent times, the concept concerning the evolution of human speech, stubbornly developed by Roman Stopa, even in opposition to the negative approach prevalent among a large part of the linguistic circles, has gained serious academic support. This occurred as a result of, for example, the studies done by the New Zealand researcher

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<sup>22</sup> IDEM, *Studies in African Languages (Essays on Phonetics, Semantics and Meaning)*, Towarzystwo Autorów i Wydawców Prac Naukowych "Universitas", Kraków 1993.

Quentin Atkinson, who – on the basis of the analysis of the phonological systems of five hundred and four of the languages used worldwide – showed that phonemic diversity becomes smaller the more distance there is from Africa, similarly as in the case of human genotype diversification.<sup>23</sup>

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<sup>23</sup> Q. ATKINSON, *Phonemic Diversity Supports a Serial Founder Effect Model of Language Expansion from Africa*, "Science" 2011, vol. 332, no. 6027, pp. 346-349.



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For Kraków-based African studies, the 1930s were a turning point, during which the developing interest in Africa would bear fruit in the form of the first independent research projects conducted in the field – on the African continent. The best example would be the studies conducted by Roman Stopa (1895-1995), considered to be the father of Polish research into African linguistics, a professor of the Jagiellonian University, a world-renowned expert on click languages. In 1935, Roman Stopa conducted linguistic studies for a few months in the area of modern-day Namibia and Botswana among its indigenous inhabitants: the San and the Khoikhoi, at the same time collecting a significant amount of ethnographic material on the culture of the San peoples. Today, this unique collection is housed by the Seweryn Udziela Ethnographic Museum in Kraków.

In reference to the rich tradition of African studies at the Jagiellonian University and in response to the increasing interest in Africa and Africans, the idea emerged to form a research centre that would bring together Kraków-based Africanists, scattered across various University units. In 2014, by the decision of the Jagiellonian University Senate, the Jagiellonian Research Center for African Studies was created as an interdepartmental unit of the University.

Excerpt from *Introduction* by Prof. Robert Kłosowicz

